

Message Text

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PEPR, LY, MT
SUBJECT: LOCAL NATIONALIST PARTY NEWSPAPER CLAIMS LIBYA
WILLING TO ESTABLISH BASE IN MALTA IF REQUESTED TO

1. THE MARCH 18 ISSUE OF THE DEMOCRAT, THE OFFICIAL
OPPOSITION (NATIONALIST) NEWSPAPER, CARRIED A FRONT PAGE
ARTICLE ASSERTING THAT LIBYA IS PREPARED TO ESTABLISH A
MILITARY BASE IN MALTA AFTER 1979, IF REQUESTED TO DO SO
"BY THE MALTESE PEOPLE". ACCORDING TO THE ARTICLE, WHICH
WAS WRITTEN BY MALTESE REPORTER, CARMEL CALLUS, MR.
AHMED SHAHATI, SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE PERMANENT
SECRETARIAT OF THE PROGRESSIVE AND SOCIALIST PARTIES AND
DIRECTOR OF THE DEPARTMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS OF
THE PEOPLE'S GENERAL CONGRESS OF THE JAMAHIRIYA AND "TOP
GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS" WERE THE SOURCES FOR THE STORY.

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SHAHATI IS ALSO QUOTED AS SAYING THAT LIBYA IS GIVING
"FULL SUPPORT" TO MALTA'S EFFORTS TO "RID ITSELF" OF
FOREIGN MILITARY BASES. LIBYA IS DOING THIS SO THAT,
TOGETHER WITH OTHER MEDITERRANEAN NATIONS, MALTA AND
LIBYA WILL BE ABLE TO TURN THE MEDITERRANEAN INTO A LAKE
OF PEACE FREE FROM FOREIGN DOMINATION.

2. THE ARTICLE STATES THAT SHAHATI AGREED WITH MALTA'S VIEW THAT THE SOVIET UNION AND THE UNITED STATES SHOULD WITHDRAW THEIR ARMED FORCES FROM THE MEDITERRANEAN, BUT SAID THAT LIBYA BELIEVED THE US SHOULD TAKE THE FIRST STEP AS THE AMERICANS WERE THE FIRST TO ESTABLISH THEIR PRESENCE IN THIS AREA.

3. ON MARCH 22 THE LIBYAN EMBASSY HERE ISSUED THE FOL-
LOWING STATEMENT WHICH WAS CARRIED IN THE LOCAL PRESS:

"FURTHER TO THE ARTICLE PUBLISHED IN THE DEMOCRAT, PAGE 1, DATED MARCH 18, 1978 UNDER THE HEADING: 'LIBYA READY TO ESTABLISH MILITARY BASE IN MALTA', THE QUESTION REGARDING THIS SUBJECT WAS WHETHER LIBYA WAS IN A POSITION TO HELP MALTA IF THERE WAS AN EMERGENCY.

"THE ANSWER WAS NATURALLY.MALTA IS A NEIGHBORING COUNTRY AND ITS SECURITY CONCERNS THE LIBYAN JAMAHIRIYA, NOT TO MENTION ALSO THE EXISTING FRIENDSHIP AND CO-OPERATION.

"FURTHERMORE, THE LIBYAN ARAB JAMAHIRIYA DOES NOT INTEND EITHER AT PRESENT OR IN THE FUTURE TO HAVE A MILITARY BASE IN ANY OTHER COUNTRY, SINCE IT OFFERS ITS HELP UNCONDITIONALLY TO THESE COUNTRIES TO ATTAIN THEIR FREEDOM."

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4. COMMENT: ACCORDING TO RELIABLE SOURCES THE GOM IS VERY UNHAPPY WITH THE DEMOCRAT'S STORY. WHILE AGREEING THAT THE STORY IS ACCURATE AS FAR AS IT GOES, THE GOM IS ALLEGEDLY PLANNING TO ISSUE A STATEMENT ASSERTING THAT MALTA HAS NO INTENTION OF ASKING ANY COUNTRY TO ESTABLISH A MILITARY BASE IN MALTA AFTER THE BRITISH BASE IS CLOSED IN MARCH, 1979. NO GOVERNMENT STATEMENT HAS APPEARED AS YET, HOWEVER, PERHAPS BECAUSE THE PRIME MINISTER IS OUT OF THE COUNTRY. WILSON

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